

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for alerting an intended recipient of a phone call, the method comprising:

identifying an account based on a phone call received from a caller;

accessing configuration data related to the account;

5 identifying several identities associated with the account based on the configuration data accessed;

determining a first identity from among the several identities based on the configuration data accessed;

10 determining whether the first identity is available to receive a first electronic communication associated with the phone call; and

sending to the first identity the first electronic communication associated with the phone call conditioned on whether the first identity is determined to be available to receive the first electronic communication.

15 2. The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the first identity is available includes checking an online status for the first identity, and wherein the first electronic communication is sent to the first identity if the first identity is determined to be online.

20 3. The method of claim 1, wherein identifying an account based on a phone call comprises identifying an account based on call related information received from a telephone network.

25 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the call-related information includes a call destination phone number and is extracted from an integrated services digital network call setup.

30 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving call origin information from a telephone network wherein the call origin information includes a caller phone number and is received through an automatic number identification service.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the first electronic communication includes at least a portion of the call origin information, such that at least a portion of the call origin information is sent to the first identity if the first identity is determined to be available to receive the call origin information.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the several identities comprise user identifiers through which an online status of an associated user may be determined.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the several identities comprise screen names for an instant messaging application.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein accessing configuration data includes accessing call waiting preferences that are tailored to each of the several identities.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein determining a first identity from among the several identities comprises determining the first identity based on the call waiting preferences.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein determining a first identity based on the call waiting preferences comprises:

examining call waiting preferences of the several identities to determine whether a phone number of the caller is included in a block list maintained for one or more of the several identities, and

selecting the first identity from among the several identities if the block list maintained for the first identity does not include the phone number of the caller.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein determining a first identity based on the call waiting preferences comprises:

accessing parental controls associated with one or more of the several identities, and

selecting the first identity based on whether the parental controls associated therewith effect restrictions for a phone number of the caller.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein determining a first identity based on the call waiting preferences comprises
accessing parental controls associated with one or more of the several identities, and
selecting the first identity based on whether the parental controls associated therewith effect restrictions for a phone number of the caller based on the time of day in which the call was received.

14. The method of claim 1, further comprising making available to the first identity call processing options that will be presented by a call destination computer system to the first identity.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the call processing options include an option to forward the call to another phone number.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein the call processing options include an option to take a message from a calling party.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein the call processing options include an option to ignore the call.

18. The method of claim 14, wherein the call processing options include an option to send an audio message to the caller.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the audio message is selectable by the first identity from among multiple different audio messages.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the multiple different audio messages include an audio message that informs the caller that the call is being redirected to another phone number.

5 21. The method of claim 19, wherein the multiple different audio messages include an audio message that informs the caller that the call will be answered by a call recipient shortly.

10 22. The method of claim 14, wherein the call processing options are tailored to the first identity.

23. The method of claim 14, further comprising receiving and processing an option selection from the first identity.

15 24. The method of claim 23, further comprising varying the processing performed with respect to the option selection based upon whether the option selection is received from the first identity within a predetermined interval of time.

20 25. The method of claim 23, wherein processing the option selection includes sending a call handling instruction that corresponds to the option selection to a telephone network through which the phone call was made.

25 26. The method of claim 25, wherein the call handling instruction directs the telephone network to forward the call.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein the call handling instruction directs the telephone network to forward the call to a voicemail system.

30 28. The method of claim 23, wherein processing the option selection includes sending to the caller an audio message that corresponds to the option selection.

29. The method of claim 14, further comprising accessing and processing a default option selection if no option selection is received from the first identity within a predetermined interval of time.

5 30. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

determining a second identity from among the several identities to receive a second electronic communication associated with the phone call;

determining whether the second identity is available to receive a second electronic communication associated with the phone call; and

10 sending to the second identity the second electronic communication associated with the phone call conditioned on whether the second identity is determined to be available to receive the second electronic communication.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the first electronic communication includes

15 data corresponding to call processing options that will be presented to the first identity by a first call destination computer system and the second electronic communication includes data corresponding to call processing options that will be presented to the second identity by a second call destination computer system.

20 32. The method of claim 31, wherein the first call destination computer and the second call destination computer are a single computer accessible to both the first identity and the second identity.

25 33. The method of claim 31, further comprising receiving a first option selection from the first identity and a second option selection from the second identity.

34. The method of claim 33, further comprising responding to the phone call in accordance with the first option selection if the first option selection is received before the second option selection.

30 35. The method of claim 33, further comprising:

accessing a rank for the first option selection and for the second option selection; and
 responding to the phone call in accordance with the first option selection if the first
 option selection has a higher rank than the second option selection.

5 36. The method of claim 33, further comprising:
 accessing a rank for the first identity and for the second identity; and
 responding to the phone call in accordance with the first option selection if the first
 identity has a higher rank than the second identity.

10 37. A computer system for alerting an intended recipient of a phone call, the
 computer system comprising:
 a data store for storing configuration data;
 a telephony interface element configured to receive a phone call from a caller; and
 a call processing element configured to
 15 identify an account based on the phone call;
 access the data store to retrieve configuration data related to the account;
 identify several identities associated with the account based on the
 configuration data accessed;
 determine a first identity from among the several identities based on the
 20 configuration data accessed;
 determine whether the first identity is available to receive a first electronic
 communication associated with the phone call; and
 sending to the first identity the first electronic communication associated with
 the phone call conditioned on whether the first identity is determined to be available
 25 to receive the first electronic communication.

 38. The computer system of claim 37, wherein the telephony interface element
 comprises an interactive voice response system.

39. The computer system of claim 37, wherein the call processing element is configured to determine the availability of the first identity by requesting the online status of the first identity from an online service provider system.

5 40. The computer system of claim 37, wherein the call processing element is configured to determine the online status of the first identity by requesting the online status of the first identity from a presence server of the online service provider system.

10 41. The computer system of claim 40, wherein the presence server of the online service provider system is a computer that receives, updates, and publishes online presence data for identities.

15 42. The computer system of claim 37, wherein the call processing element is configured to send to the first identity the first electronic communication by sending the first electronic communication to an online service provider system which sends the first electronic communication to the first identity.

20 43. The computer system of claim 37, wherein the call processing element is configured to send to the first identity the first electronic communication by sending the first electronic communication to an alerts system of an online service provider system which sends the first electronic communication to the first identity.

25 44. The computer system of claim 43, wherein the alerts system is a computer system configured to enable real time or near real time transmission of the first electronic communication to the first identity.

30 45. The computer system of claim 37, wherein the telephony interface element is further configured receive call-related information from a telephone network and to send the call-related information to the call processing element and the call processing element is configured to identify an account based on the call-related information.

46. The computer system of claim 45, wherein the call-related information includes a call destination phone number and the telephony interface element is configured to receive the call destination phone number which is extracted from an integrated services digital network call setup. .

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47. The computer system of claim 45, wherein the telephony interface element is configured to receive call origin information from the telephone network wherein the call origin information includes a caller phone number and is received by the telephony interface element through an automatic number identification service.

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48. The computer system of claim 47, wherein the first electronic communication includes at least a portion of the call origin information, such that at least a portion of the call origin information is sent to the first identity if the first identity is determined to be available to receive the call origin information.

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49. The computer system of claim 37, wherein the several identities comprise user identifiers through which an online status of an associated user may be determined.

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50. The computer system of claim 49, wherein the several identities comprise screen names for an instant messaging application.

51. The computer system of claim 37, wherein the call processing element is configured to retrieve configuration data that includes call waiting preferences that are tailored to each of the several identities.

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52. The computer system of claim 51, wherein the call processing element is configured to determine a first identity from among the several identities based on the call waiting preferences.

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53. The computer system of claim 52, wherein the call processing element is configured to:

examine call waiting preferences of the several identities to determine whether a phone number of the caller is included in a block list maintained for one or more of the several identifiers, and

5 select the first identity from among the several identities if the block list maintained for the first identity does not include the phone number of the caller.

54. The computer system of claim 52, wherein the call processing element is configured to determine a first identity based on the call waiting preferences by:

10 accessing parental controls associated with one or more of the several identifiers, and selecting the first identity based on whether the parental controls associated therewith effect restrictions for a phone number of the caller.

55. The computer system of claim 52, wherein the call processing element is configured to determine a first identity based on the call waiting preferences by:

15 accessing parental controls associated with one or more of the several identifiers, and selecting the first identity based on whether the parental controls associated therewith effect restrictions for a phone number of the caller based on the time of day in which the call was received.

20 56. The computer system of claim 37, wherein the call processing element makes available to the first identity call processing options that will be presented by a call destination computer system to the first identity.

25 57. The computer system of claim 56, wherein the call processing options include an option to forward the call to another phone number.

58. The computer system of claim 56, wherein the call processing options include an option to take a message from a calling party.

30 59. The computer system of claim 56, wherein the call processing options include an option to ignore the call.

60. The computer system of claim 56, wherein the call processing options include an option to send an audio message to the caller.

5 61. The computer system of claim 60, wherein the audio message is selectable by the first identity from among multiple different audio messages.

62. The computer system of claim 61, wherein the multiple different audio messages include an audio message that informs the caller that the call is being redirected to another phone number.

63. The computer system of claim 61, wherein the multiple different audio messages include an audio message that informs the caller that the call will be answered by a call recipient shortly.

15 64. The computer system of claim 56, wherein the call processing options are tailored to the first identity.

65. The computer system of claim 57, wherein the call processing element is further configured to receive and process an option selection from the first identity.

20 66. The computer system of claim 65, wherein the call processing element is further configured to vary the processing performed with respect to the option selection based upon whether the option selection is received from the first identity within a predetermined interval of time.

25 67. The computer system of claim 65, wherein the call processing element is further configured to process the option selection by sending a response to the telephony interface element directing the telephony interface element to send a call handling instruction that corresponds to the option selection to a telephone network through which the phone call was made.

68. The computer system of claim 67, wherein the call handling instruction directs the telephone network to forward the call.

5 69. The computer system of claim 67, wherein the call handling instruction directs the telephone network to forward the call to a voicemail system.

70. The computer system of claim 67, wherein the call processing element is configured to process the option selection by sending an audio message that corresponds to the option selection to the caller.

10 71. The computer system of claim 56, wherein the call processing element is further configured to access and process a default option selection if no option selection is received from the first identity within a predetermined interval of time.

15 72. The computer system of claim 37, wherein the call processing element is further configured to:

determine a second identity from among the several identities to receive a second electronic communication associated with the phone call

20 determine whether the second identity is available to receive a second electronic communication associated with the phone call; and

send to the second identity the second electronic communication associated with the phone call conditioned on whether the second identity is determined to be available to receive the second electronic communication.

25 73. The computer system of claim 72, wherein the first electronic communication includes data corresponding to call processing options that will be presented to the first identity by a first call destination computer system and the second electronic communication includes data corresponding to call processing options that will be presented to the second identity by a second call destination computer system.

74. The computer system of claim 73, wherein the first call destination computer and the second call destination computer are a single computer accessible to both the first identity and the second identity.

5 75. The computer system of claim 73, wherein the call processing element is further configured to receive a first option selection from the first identity and a second option selection from the second identity.

10 76. The computer system of claim 75, wherein the call processing element is further configured to respond to the phone call in accordance with the first option selection if the first option selection is received before the second option selection.

15 77. The computer system of claim 75, wherein the call processing element is further configured to:
access a rank for the first option selection and for the second options selection; and
respond to the phone call in accordance with the first option selection if the first option selection has a higher rank than the second option selection.

20 78. The computer system of claim 75, wherein the call processing element is further configured to:
access a rank for the first identity and for the second identity; and
respond to the phone call in accordance with the first option selection if the first identity has a higher rank than the second identity.

25 79. An apparatus for alerting an intended recipient of a phone call, the apparatus comprising:
means for identifying an account based on a phone call received from a caller;
means for accessing configuration data related to the account;
means for identifying several identities associated with the account based on
30 the configuration data accessed;

means for determining a first identity from among the several identities based on the configuration data accessed;

means for determining whether the first identity is available to receive a first electronic communication associated with the phone call; and

5 means for sending to the first identity the first electronic communication associated with the phone call conditioned on whether the first identity is determined to be available to receive the first electronic communication.